

than 10^{-8} M to less than 10^{-9} M. Specifically, a family of monoclonal antibodies binding to conformationally conserved epitopes of the HCV E2 protein is provided. Among the family are antibodies that bind to the dominant genotypes found in the United States, so as to be substantially pan-monoclonal antibodies in being able to bind to almost all cases of HCV infection, which have been diagnosed in the United States, as well as at least a substantial proportion of the cases in other geographic locales. The monoclonal antibodies find use in a variety of diagnostic assays. In addition, conformationally conserved expression of recombinant type 1 and type 2 HCV E2 proteins and fragments thereof are provided for use in assays, screening drugs, vaccines, diagnostic assays, and for other purposes. The inventive antibodies find use in passive immunotherapy strategies for reducing viral load of infected individuals and interfering with the infection of target cells. Antibodies recognizing conformationally dependent epitopes can also be used to provide a template for the rational design of peptide and conformationally-defined epitope mimetics (e.g., organic compounds, organometallic compounds, inorganic compounds, small molecules).

Please insert the following paragraph at page 24, line 5.

Mouse/human heteromyeloma cell lines expressing monoclonal antibody CBH-4B and CBH-4G were deposited on June 18, 2002 with the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) (10801 University Blvd., Manassas, VA 20110-2209) and assigned ATCC numbers PTA-4466 and PTA-4468, respectively. Also included in this deposit were other mouse/human heteromyeloma cell lines expressing antibodies CBH-2 (PTA-4465), CBH-4B (PTA-4466), CBH-4D (PTA-4467), CBH-4G (PTA-4468), CBH-5 (PTA-4469), CBH-7 (PTA 4470), CBH-8 (PTA-4471), CBH-11 (PTA-4472), and CBH-17 (PTA-4473), described herein below.